

MEN OF THE ROCKIES

Publisher of

UP FROM THE HILLS
MEN OF THE ROCKIES
WOULD YOU LIVE IT AGAIN?
AND OTHERS

People I have known in the shadow of the hills

BY

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"All boyism, all boyism," he replied. "Let me show you how!" He immediately took the blindfold, hobbles, and lasso off and stepped up into the saddle and rode the pony across the yard. To show the boys he was not a bad horse, he kept riding until they overtook him on their ponies. They started down a narrow gulch, when they crowded together. The pony which Ephraim Hanks rode lunged and plunged down the hill into the creek. The lario strap on the saddle which held the cinch broke, Eph Hanks and his saddle fell on the stones and bruised the foot where the frozen toes were gone. A few days later he died peacefully as the gangrene poison spread from his crippled foot through his body.

Family and doctors plead operation, but, like Soc-rates, he said, "I have only a few days more to live and I will take my body with me intact."

Dispensing hope into the lives of men is and has been the work of churches and religion since the dawn of time. Civilized or savage, the hope producing ceremonies have been performed much to the consolation of recipients. Men should be entitled to the rights and ceremonies which bring them hope and make them live and die more comfortably. Two thousand Indians gathered around the ranch, and on the mountain tops kindled great watch fires, danced their medicine dance; but "Queant's" spirit passed quietly the way of all flesh. The Latter Day Saints Church conducted the funeral service. He died a Latter Day Saint, a Patri-arch.

CHAPTER IV

NYMPHAS CORIDON MURDOCK —MORMON PIONEER

Nymphas came home one evening late, tipsy and tipsy, and went to bed. Melissa and Esther, his two wives, decided to settle family scores. They turned Nymphas on his back in bed. Melissa perched, 300 pounds of motherly dignity, squarely on his neck and shoulders. Esther used the old rawhide slipper. They paid all family scores, and returned all his spankings his mother had omitted.

NYMPHAS CORIDON MURDOCK was born at Utica, New York, May 12, 1833. His father was Joseph Murdock, a Mormon convert who emigrated to New York from New England. His mother was Sally Stacy Murdock. His eldest brother, Joseph S. Murdock; a half-sister, Betsey Murdock Green; and a brother, John Murdock, were the members of the Murdock family. They owned a sugar bush (a grove of maple sugar trees), at, or near, Utica, New York. When they were converted to the Latter Day Saints faith, the family sold their property and emigrated to the Mormon headquarters at Nauvoo, Illinois. When they arrived there, the family assets were placed at the dis-

posals of Joseph Smith, the Mormon Prophet. Their allotments among the Mormon people were duly made and, after they had annexed themselves and all they owned to the Mormon cause, Joseph Murdock, the father, died.

Sally Stacy Murdock was his wife by a second marriage. A typical New England old maid, she inherited New England traditions, appetites, ambitions, and thrift—a typical Yankee. Sally became the boss when her husband died. She drove a one-horse shay behind the wagon which carried the family and baggage from Utica, New York, to Nauvoo, and was not pleased with the family and property annexation to the Mormons. The following morning after her husband's funeral, she took her family, wagon, and one-horse shay and began the march straightway to Utica. They made camp as usual at the end of the first day's journey. When she awoke the next morning, she ordered her sons to hitch the oxen to the wagon and return to Nauvoo. Something happened in the night which changed her mind. No one ever knew what.

1846 When the Mormons were driven out of Nauvoo, Sally with her sons were among the first who started in the procession west. Nymphas Coridon Murdock drove the oxen hitched to the wagon which carried the family supplies and baggage. He was twelve years old, her youngest son. Two yoke of oxen and a pair of sleek heifers were yoked to this covered wagon

which Nymphas drove so proudly across the plains. His mother followed in the one-horse shay, which contained, among other things, a spinning wheel, loom, hickory chairs, etc. One old hickory chair survived, which fell to the author. She led three sheep under her wagons from the bank of the Missouri River to Salt Lake City. They were, in truth, the beginning of the sheep industry among the Mormon people. She used the wool which she sheared from these three sheep and spun the first yarn made in Utah.

Nymphas was given a Mormon patriarchal blessing by Hyrum Smith, brother of the Prophet, at the beginning of this journey. He memorized it and kept it as one of his most sacred possessions throughout his life. His favorite sentences were, "You shall be blessed with a tongue which shall speak as a ready writer and you shall have life as long as you desire it." He memorized many poems, which he recited with satisfaction and ability, publicly and privately. "The Old Grey Mare" was one of his favorites; "A Regular Wax Works" was another. He was a good mixer. People old and young liked him.

They arrived in Salt Lake City in 1847 and lived in the old Fort. When the plan for Salt Lake City was completed, the people drew city lots. Nymphas received a lot on Main and 4th South, where the Newhouse Hotel was later built. Sally Stacy Murdock drew her lot on 3rd South and Main Street, where Sears, Roe-

buck store now stands. Mother and son made their home together on the Main Street lot drawn by Nymphas. Their home was a conglomeration of covered wagon and wikiup, finally developing into a huge eight-room adobe house.

No words can portray the struggle of mother and son to maintain their home and retain the union of body and soul. The food supply which they brought with them was shared and used until it was gone. Clothing and other necessities were worn out. They were thirteen hundred miles from the nearest store; if a store had been next door, they had no money with which to buy. Consequently, their clothes had to be manufactured and food produced. One of the main articles of food was wild segos, which they dug from the ground north of the city. When an ox or a beef was butchered, the skins of the hind legs were turned with the hairy side in, the toes were sewed securely with rawhide, and the hock-joints were used for heels. A string of rawhide was fixed through the top, and lo, rawhide boots were made. Buckskin suits were made from deer skin. Nymphas' first party suit was an old striped bed-tick transformed by his mother into pants and shirt. Sally Murdock traded for three heifers. They were in Ogden. Nymphas was dispatched, post-haste, to bring them. He had eight biscuits in a salt sack, and barefooted, but he brought the heifers home safely, a distance of seventy-five miles. He was twenty years old when he bought his first pair of store shoes.

The famous Mormon cricket scourge made it necessary for the people to battle the insects night and day. They obtained the longest ropes possible, taking turns to pull the ropes over and back across the fields, lots and gardens. Two people, one at each end of the rope, would work until they were tired, then others would continue. This strenuous work kept the insects in the air until the sea-gulls came. Thus the sea-gulls became a protected and sacred bird in Utah, for the loss of their crops meant starvation to these people.

Many poor immigrants arrived without food or clothing. These were taken into the homes of people who could care for them. Benjamin Norris, after a wallop from his uncle, which he resented, annexed himself to a Mormon immigrant train somewhere in Nebraska. When he arrived in Salt Lake City, Nymphas and Sally took him to their home.

A neighbor's cow broke the fence and was eating the young corn. Nymphas was furious and said, "I wish someone would kill that darned old cow!" Ben, wishing to be agreeable and accommodating, shot the cow. Nymphas paid the damage bill, forty dollars.

Ben became the chore-boy and, considering his mental equipment, he did more than his best. Sally Stacy Murdock possessed in her own right a big tortoise shell tomcat, of which she was very proud. The tomcat was sitting on the warm manure pile when Ben appeared with his rifle and shot the cat. When Sally

Stacy Murdock asked Ben for an explanation, he answered, "The cat was saying its prayers, and I am sure he was asking God to let him come to heaven." Nymphas said that Ben was a little balmy at times. Ben was cared for and looked after by Nymphas until his death. Nymphas told me, "Ben doesn't have all his shingles, and I must help him when I can." When they were both old, they met in Salt Lake City. Nymphas took Ben to sleep with him. Ben had an Indian arrow-head in his shoulder, a relic from the trip across the plains. Nymphas dressed his old wound, slept with him, and came home as lousy as a monkey.

Nymphas Murdock had the milk of human kindness flowing through his soul. He helped those who needed help throughout his entire lifetime. William Brummley, Samuel Shelly, Ernest Webb, George Chase, and others too numerous to mention were helped by Nymphas.

His first military service was in Echo Canyon. The male population of Mormondom was drafted to fortify Echo Canyon when Johnston's Army was dispatched to annihilate the Mormons. He assisted in military procedure and was taught to use guns. He helped fortify the canyon from rocks, cliffs, trees and stones so that they would make a cross fire in the bottom of the canyon. In short, he starved, worked and struggled with and for the Mormon cause from the time he was nine years old until he died.

The fortifications in Echo Canyon and the preparation of Salt Lake City for the torch was the first supreme united effort of the Mormon people to defend themselves in what they considered their rights, in which they all took part. They unitedly stood guard and waited while negotiations were consummated with the Government of the United States. Johnston's Army was held at bay at Fort Bridger, Wyoming, and forced into winter quarters there by Brigham Young directing his Mormon pioneers.

When Governor Cummings was appointed and brought to take charge of the Territory of Utah, he was accompanied by the soldiers to the Mormon fortification in Echo Canyon, where they were joined and escorted to Salt Lake City by the Mormon Volunteers. These Mormons managed to form on each side of the way and stand at attention while he passed. After he passed through the entire Mormon company, they reformed and re-arranged so that he passed through their formation three times before he arrived in Salt Lake City. Nymphas Murdock was one of these volunteers. The clever rearrangement of the companies of Mormon soldiers had its desired effect. Governor Cummings sent a sealed message to General Johnston at Fort Bridger. It contained the following message, "Johnston, for your sake and for God's sake, do not come until you can come peaceably. These mountains are full of Mormons armed to the teeth."

The coming of the gold seekers in 1849 gave to Nymphas Murdock his first opportunity to accumulate mules, harnesses, wagons, saddles and other equipment. He traded and kept camp yard, and in this business he acquired his first financial resources. His mother's Yankee traits he inherited naturally, her appetites he acquired, and he was forced to live by the rules of her thrift and economy. No New England Yankee was a better trader, or a better keeper than Nymphas Coridan Murdock. His habits and customs were typically Yankee. I have heard him say many times, "My mother taught me to be moderate in all things." After a good trade or a successful year he celebrated. His celebrations were not always sober. When under the influence of grog, his disposition did not improve. More often he would hunt a fight, and if fighting men were not available, he often disturbed the peaceful serenity of his home and the neighborhood.

Once when he was displeased with his mother's housekeeping and cooking, he told her so with great emphasis. She replied, "If you don't like my housekeeping and cooking, just go and get you a wife. You are old enough and big enough to marry." He immediately put on his bed-tick shirt, store shoes and his best manners and went to call on Sarah Melissa Barney. The visit became a checker game in which Royal Barney, the father of Melissa, was defeated. The victorious Nymphas Murdock challenged Sarah Melissa to play

checkers. The game was never finished. She promised to be his wife on such short acquaintance that he did not dare seal the bargain with a kiss; instead he gave her a Mexican dollar as pledge, which was all the money he possessed. The Mexican dollar bound it for life in the absence of a ring. The courtship was short, but the union was life-long. It began in a wikiup made of willows. Their total equipment was a butcher knife, a frying-pan and an axe. Sally Stacy Murdock became the grand-mother of four beautiful children.

Plural marriage was practiced among the Mormons; in fact, it was considered a commandment of God to the Mormons. Esther Maria Davis, a beautiful Mormon girl, was presented to Nymphas by Sarah Melissa, the first wife, as Sarah presented Hagar to Jacob, as a second wife. Thus began an unharmonious life for Nymphas Coridon Murdock.

To the few who have lived through the unpleasantness of plural marriage, this will need no explanation. Harmony reigned but seldom in the polygamist household, and Nymphas Murdock's household was no exception. Differences, dissatisfactions and turmoil were more often the everyday occurrence. The big adobe house was not big enough for his two wives and his mother. In-laws seldom live harmoniously together.

Louisa Norris, the sister of Ben, came to keep house for the Murdock family and Nymphas and Louisa became engaged. Nymphas one day went to the field,

failing to leave wood chopped for the fire with which to cook dinner. Louisa took the axe and chopped his best ox-yoke into stove wood. When Nymphas returned, he was furious and slapped Louisa's face. This ended their engagement. They continued, however, to be friends to the end of their lives.

In one year Sally Stacy Murdock and nine grandchildren died, the children with diphtheria, and Grandmother Murdock from old age. They were all buried in the cemetery in Salt Lake City. Nymphas Coridon Murdock and Sarah Melissa, his first wife, also rest in the same sacred ground.

After the death of great-grandmother Murdock and the nine children, the Salt Lake home was still not large enough. Consequently, Nymphas in 1864 acquired land at Charleston, Utah, where he and one family resided. He later opened a store at Heber City and the first cooperative store in Charleston, Utah.

For many years the family of Nymphas Murdock was divided between the home at Salt Lake City and the ranch at Charleston. Journeys, at irregular intervals, were made to and from these places. These trips were historical. Nymphas carried ranch products to the city and city products to the ranch. On one of these trips he had a wagon-load of merchandise, pitchforks, shovels, picks, etc. Among the etcetera was a barrel of apple cider. His nephew was a companion. The spirited team of bays brought wagon and its contents

safely as far as Provo Canyon. Nymphas and his nephew decided a few drinks of cider would improve their bodily condition and make the journey more pleasant. The further up the canyon they drove, the more cider they drank. Nymphas did the driving until his nephew decided that he, not his uncle, was the best teamster. A furious argument arose and, when on the highest, most dangerous dug-way in the canyon, one or the other turned the horses off the narrow road by pulling the wrong line. Horses, wagon, merchandise and Nymphas rolled and tumbled in a mangled heap over the precipice into the bottom of the canyon. The nephew stepped out of the wagon and stayed on the road. When the rescue party came to salvage the wreckage, they found both horses alive and Nymphas with a pitch-fork wound in his side. This danger point in Provo Canyon was named the Murdock Dug-way in commemoration of this historical event, and a lesson to drunken drivers.

Another trip which made history happened when a wagon loaded with family property and household equipment overturned into the swollen stream of high, muddy water in Parley's Canyon. Everything was lost except the oxen and wagon. The second accident was ciderless.

For many years travel between city and ranch continued, but finally the city property was sold for \$7,500 and the residence of the Murdock family was permanently established at Charleston, Utah.

The most saving grace in the history of humanity is and has been the religions of our race. Nymphas adhered strictly to the principles and commandments of the Latter Day Saints religion. The famous Word of Wisdom was first taught as a promise of health and strength by Joseph Smith, the Prophet. "You shall walk and not be weary, run and not faint, if you will abstain from all hot and strong drink." Tobacco, tea, coffee, and many other articles of food in temperate practice were included in this famous Word of Wisdom and its promise. The early Mormons did not adhere strictly to our present Word of Wisdom. To indulge in a little spree, or a big one, was not considered a breach of their religion in principle. This famous Word of Wisdom was given by one of the later prophets as a Commandment of God.

Cider, brandy, wine, tobacco was never taboo with Sally Stacy Murdock. It was Nymphas's duty to fill her clay pipe, light it with a coal from the fireplace, and hand it to her while she worked at the loom. Thus, he learned to smoke, much to his mother's discomfort. His indulgence with her as a child in brandies, toddies, home-brew, etc., also added to her disapproval. Late in her life she blamed herself and exacted a promise from Nymphas that before his death he would stop all these indulgences which he had so legitimately learned.

After the family was established in Charleston, from

the ranch and the store they prospered. Nymphas Coridon Murdock; Sarah Melissa Barney Murdock; their son, Joseph R. Murdock; the second wife, Esther Maria Davis; Eunice Louisa Murdock; Alva M. Murdock; and Ella M. Watson Murdock is the Nymphas Murdock family as I knew them. Fred Murdock and Melissa Murdock died with diphtheria at Charleston. Nymphas was chosen Latter Day Saints bishop of the Charleston Ward. He presided for twenty-eight or thirty years. When the people and their religion became more modern, some of his ward members were dissatisfied. He was reported to his stake president, Abraham Hatch, for breaking the Word of Wisdom. The complaints were duly considered, and those who complained were told, "Will you please inquire for me what kind of grog Bishop Murdock drinks; I should like to buy a quart and present it to each Bishop in the Church. Perhaps it would arouse them to a sense of their responsibilities."

Poverty and Indian troubles during the Black Hawk War made the ranch life difficult. Nymphas became an Indian-fighting soldier. The Indian raids became troublesome in the Black Hawk War. They stole a number of his cattle and horses, and Nymphas with his neighboring ranchers went on numerous scouting expeditions; other companies of ranchers and citizens did the same. Nymphas and his companions stopped to eat lunch. While they were resting, a company of

Scouts from Heber City looked down on them from the top of a ridge. These approaching scouts could not see them clearly and mistook them for Indians and began shooting at them. Nymphas was wounded in the leg. This mistake almost cost Nymphas his life, but distinguished him as a Black Hawk Veteran.

He saved, worked, and prospered, and all who were with him, or near him, did the same. His judgment and reason were unusually good. Many people sought his advice and financial aid. He gave both freely. Nymphas was scrupulously honest. He paid his debts and insisted that his debtors pay theirs.

He was released from the bishopric of the Charleston Ward and ordained a Patriarch in the Latter Day Saints Church. He gave Patriarchal Blessings to his children and grandchildren and many other church members who requested him to do so. He financed and superintended the building of the Charleston Amusement Hall, and when he left Charleston to reside in Heber City, in 1908, he gave to the ward the amusement hall for the church, which since has been remodeled and improved; but the building Nymphas gave to the church is still their public meeting house. He donated liberally to any community service or building program for improvement.

He built fourteen homes during his lifetime, several in Salt Lake City, one at American Fork, and others in Charleston. His last and fourteenth home was built

in Heber City. It was equipped with electric lights, bathroom, city water, golden oak mantles which encased two tile fireplaces, and a telephone was installed. The lights, bathroom, and city water in the Heber house were his first and only modern conveniences.

Nymphas would always hesitate to use the telephone. His wife would never use it. She said, "It makes me feel as if I were talking to the dead." One cold winter morning, Nymphas arose early as usual, lighted the customary fire in the kitchen stove. The water jacket had frozen, and a few minutes later a terrific explosion occurred. Stove lids were hurled to the ceiling. Soot, ashes, and water covered the kitchen. Nymphas and Melissa were dressing peacefully, close to the kitchen stove, but both were unharmed. They were very cautious about lighting a fire in the kitchen stove the remainder of their days.

Each morning at five o'clock, and always before seven, he would arise, and everyone who was within calling distance arose also. His days were filled with energetic and useful work. He was always proud to say, "When I die, I will have ten years of work planned." When the family would wait because of the ranch work, he would say, "I would rather be a big toad in a little puddle than a little toad in a big puddle. That is why I left Salt Lake City." Another morsel of his favorite philosophy was, "Take all the wool from a sheep each year, but don't hurt the skin; it will bring another crop next year. Moral: do not

skin your neighbors." Often he said, "One boy is a boy; two boys equal half a boy; three boys equal no boy at all; also, a poor man has but one dog; a poverty stricken man has two dogs; a beggar has all the he can get. We can always tell how poor a man is by the number of dogs he has." He loved his prophesy, and for all I know his prophecies always came true.

We were riding in his carriage one day when he said, "I am getting old and you are not well; either of us may die soon. If I go first, and can, I will come back and talk with you. If you die first, and can, I want you to come back and talk with me." This was our bargain.

Esther M. Davis, his second wife, did not live with Nymphas as his wife after the property was sold in Salt Lake City. She demanded a church divorce, a division of their property, which was granted unwillingly by Nymphas. She maintained her home and died at Charleston, Utah.

Sarah Melissa Barney Murdock, his first wife, moved with him from Charleston to their new home in Heber City. All her life she had a horror of death. She did not look upon her father, mother, or her children after they were dead. She worried all her life about death, and all the family sympathized with her sincerely. She suffered with diabetes, which affected her eyes. The last few years of her life she could not see well. One morning she told Nymphas, "I will lie here in bed and

rest," and she slept peacefully on into the realms of eternity and died without discomfort.

If life continues long enough, all of us must face it alone. After the death of his two wives, Nymphas Murdock was very much alone. He could not adapt himself to the family circles of his children. He did not know how to live in his own home without his family, and after much discussion and deliberation he married Elizabeth Green. She was seventy-five years old; he was eighty. Their marriage was duly consummated for time in the Mormon Temple. They were both married in former ceremonies for eternity. Consequently the marriage for life was proper. A property settlement before their marriage was entered into and was satisfactory to all concerned.

Nymphas never lost his sense of humor, nor his love of life. He said to me when I called to pay my respects to the newlyweds, "Well, you just as well say what you're thinkin' and not be standing there grinning. I will tell you before you ask. Elizabeth and I have decided not to have any children." I answered, "Nymphas Murdock, if you and Aunt Elizabeth will raise a boy, I will buy him shoes until he dies." These two aged people were much happier together in their home than either could have been alone.

When he was eighty years old, he decided to observe strictly the modern version of the Word of Wisdom of the Mormon Church. He said to me, "I promised my

mother I would observe the Word of Wisdom strictly, and I will do it." He did. This was the strongest struggle that I have ever known a human being to make.

He had saved and accumulated during his lifetime more than forty thousand dollars. He gave in his will to each grandchild one hundred dollars. He also gave to each granddaughter a heifer calf when she was born and to each grandson a mare colt. He divided equally among his four children, Joseph R. Murdock, Alva M. Murdock, Eunice Louisa Murdock Hanks, Ella M. Murdock Watson, his remaining property.

He was not well the last four years he lived. Old age claimed his body and mind. He was better and worse, never well. The last week he went to bed. He was really ill. The family doctor was in regular attendance. On the morning of April 19, he insisted that he would get up. He seemed much better. When the doctor called, he said, "Well, Uncle Nymphas, you are better this morning." He answered, "You might think so, Doctor Hatch, but I am not. I have just stayed here in this bed too long and now I am going to get up."

Doctor Hatch answered, "Wait until tomorrow morning, and, if you still feel better, you can get up."

All day he talked and wanted to call in the neighbors for a visit. About 10:00 P.M. he put his feet on the floor and said, "I am going to get out of here."

He fell back on the bed. The folks made him as comfortable as possible. His wife, Elizabeth, knelt on the floor on the right side of the bed, and his son Joseph knelt on the left side of the bed, and the last act of Nymphas Murdock's life was to put his hands on both their heads while he gave them his parting blessing. Thus he died on April 19, 1917.